



Office of Arts & Culture • 1000 Hilltop Circle • Baltimore, MD 21250

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact only:
Tom Moore
tmoore@umbc.edu
410-455-3370

UMBC Presents “IN 10” Theatre Festival and National Play Competition

Five Short Plays Presented Each Evening,
Including the Premiere of a New Work by Heather McDonald

March 1-4, 2007
UMBC Theatre



Baltimore, MD (February 2, 2007) — The UMBC Department of Theatre presents the IN 10 Theatre Festival and National Play Competition, March 1-4 at the UMBC Theatre. Each evening, theatergoers will enjoy five short plays, including the premiere of a new work by Baltimore area playwright Heather McDonald.

Inaugurated in 2006, the annual IN 10 National Play Competition seeks to address the scarcity of strong roles for young women in

contemporary American plays. By creating a national competition for 10-minute long plays that feature solid acting opportunities for young actresses, the UMBC Department of Theatre hopes to help commence a new era in contemporary American playwrighting. The national winner is awarded a \$1,000 cash prize and performances at the Festival. Additionally, each year the IN 10 Festival and National Play Competition commissions a new work by a noted American playwright.

The winner of the 2007 IN 10 Competition is EM Lewis, whose work, *The Edge of Ross Island*, will be staged along with the work of three other finalists: Ruth McKee's *Otherwise Engaged*, Ira Gamerman's *A Girl with a Black Eye*, and Mark Young's *The Final*

Movement. The commissioned playwright for 2007 is Maryland resident Heather McDonald, whose play, *The Two Marys*, will receive its premiere during the Festival.

Susan McCully, IN 10's artistic director and member of the faculty of UMBC's Department of Theatre, said, "A very concrete intent drives the IN 10 Festival. University theatre departments throughout the United States tend to have more women than men in their programs, but most of the stronger roles in contemporary theatre are for men. Young actresses need to work on plays in which their characters drive the action."

Lynn Watson, chair of UMBC's Department of Theatre, added, "When we first did IN 10 last season, it was very gratifying to see the effect that producing those plays had on our young female cast. At rehearsal discussions and talk-backs with audiences, we could hear and see the actors' exhilaration at finally occupying the *center* of the dramatic action, rather than reflecting it or revolving around it, as is all too often the case. In our acting classes, young woman often search in vain to find contemporary scenes where issues that engage them are addressed with complexity and subtlety, if they're addressed at all. So much of the time, young female characters are two-dimensional and 'functionary'—the girlfriend, the daughter, the co-worker—serving to advance the story or provide a foil to respond to male concerns. Last year, the young women in IN 10 responded with tremendous pleasure and pride as they took on characters and issues written expressly for them. And we are seeing the same response this year in the cast of IN 10 2007."

About the Playwrights

IN 10 Competition Winner:



EM Lewis: *The Edge of Ross Island*

EM Lewis' work has been read and produced around the country. Her new full-length play, *HEADS*—a hostage drama set against the war in Iraq—was read at Pacific Resident Theatre, and will be included in New York University's hotINK International Festival of New Plays in January 2007. *Infinite Black Suitcase*, a large ensemble piece set in rural Oregon, was developed and received a workshop production at Moving Arts in 2005. The play was named a semi-finalist for the O'Neill Playwrights Conference in 2006 and a finalist in the Hinton Battle Theatre Lab's "Diverse

Voices" playwriting contest. Lewis is a writer-in-residence at Moving Arts Theatre Company in Los Angeles and a member of the Dramatists Guild and the Alliance of Los Angeles Playwrights. Outside the theatre world, Lewis is co-founder and editor of the online literary journal *Sunspinner*. She lives in Santa Monica, California and is originally from Oregon.

IN 10 Competition Finalists:

Ruth McKee: *Otherwise Engaged*

Ruth McKee's plays include *The Nightshade Family*, which was a finalist in the Kendeda Graduate Playwriting Contest, Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, and was recently read at Playwrights Horizons; *Security Check*, presented at Six Figures Theatre Company's Artists of Tomorrow Festival 2006; *500 Words*, produced in the 2005 Baldwin New Play Festival at the University of California, San Diego; *Cargo*, produced in BNPf 2004; *Mail Returned*, produced at UCSD and in the Six Figures AOT Festival 2004; *The Noise Room*, developed at HB Playwrights Foundation; *Development*, produced at Access Theater and

Chashama in New York. Originally from Canada by way of Bangladesh and Kenya, Ruth has a BFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU and an MFA in Playwriting from UCSD, San Diego. She currently lives in Los Angeles and teaches playwriting at UCSD and Idyllwild Arts Academy.

Ira Gamerman: *Girl with a Black Eye*

Ira Gamerman received his BA in theatre from Towson University. His plays have been performed in Maryland, California, Alaska, and at such prestigious venues as the Kennedy Center. In 2005, he participated in the Kennedy Center's summer playwriting intensive, where he studied under such nationally/internationally known playwrights as Lee Blessing, Roberto Aguirre Sacassa, and Gary Garrison. Gamerman is the founder of The Playwrights Group of Baltimore, a group dedicated to developing new plays in Baltimore. His first full-length play, *No One Told You...*, received a Maryland State Arts Council grant for playwriting in 2005. His second full-length play, *Split*, won first place production and third place play at the 2006 Baltimore Playwrights Festival. Ira was voted "Best Playwright Of Baltimore" by Baltimore's *City Paper* in 2006. As a songwriter/guitarist, Ira fronts local indie band, EVEN SO.

Mark Young: *The Final Movement*

Mark Young is a Chicago playwright and Resident Playwright at Chicago Dramatists, where many of his plays have been developed. He has twice been a finalist for the Heideman Award at the Actors Theatre of Louisville for his plays *Night* (2004) and *Black And White* (2002). In 2002, his play *They All Fall Down* was a finalist for the Arts & Letters Prize, selected by John Guare. *They All Fall Down* subsequently appeared at the Source Theatre in Washington D.C., along with his one-act play *New Orleans*, as part of the 2002 Washington Theatre Festival. Both *They All Fall Down* and *New Orleans* received the Source Theatre's H.D. Lewis New Play Award, as an evening of one acts titled *Young Love*. He is a graduate of St. John's College and received his M.A. from the University of Chicago.

Commissioned Playwright:



Heather McDonald: *The Two Marys*

Heather McDonald was commissioned by Houston Grand Opera and composer Jake Heggie (*Dead Man Walking*) to write the libretto for an opera based on Graham Greene's novel *The End of the Affair*. The opera, also titled *The End of the Affair*, had its world premiere at Houston Grand Opera in March 2004 directed by Broadway director Leonard Foglia and starring Australian soprano Cheryl Barker and New Zealand baritone Teddy Tahu Rhodes. The opera received a second production at Madison Opera, and a third production will be in Seattle at Opera Pacifica fall 2005. Subsequent productions are planned for Pittsburgh, New York and Australia.

Heather McDonald's play *An Almost Holy Picture* was produced on Broadway starring Kevin Bacon and directed by Michael Mayer. It was nominated for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize. The play premiered at the La Jolla Playhouse starring David Morse and was named Best New Play of the Year by the *Los Angeles Times*. Ms. McDonald received the Kesselring Award for Best New American Play from the National

Arts Club. The play has subsequently been produced at Center Stage in Baltimore, Round House Theatre in Washington, D.C., the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre and in numerous other theatres around the country. *Holy Picture* has been translated into Spanish and produced in Mexico and Spain.

Her play *When Grace Comes In* received joint World Premieres at The La Jolla Playhouse and Seattle Repertory Theatre. The play was a finalist for The Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and was developed at The Sundance Theatre Laboratory, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and The New Harmony Project. Ms. McDonald has continued to work on *Grace* and a new version received a workshop through FirstLook Productions in New York directed by Rebecca Taichman and starring Marcia Gay Harden.

The production Ms. McDonald directed of her play *Dream of a Common Language* for Theatre of the First Amendment was nominated by The Washington Theatre Awards Society for eight Helen Hayes Awards and won four including Outstanding Resident Production. *Dream* premiered at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and was produced Off-Broadway at The Judith Anderson Theatre. It has had many other productions.

Ms. McDonald directed her play *Available Light*, a play with music, at Signature Theatre, which was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The NEA support allowed for the commissioning and recording (at the NPR studios) of a full score by composer David Maddox. *Available Light* premiered at The Actors Theatre of Louisville in the Humana Festival.

Other plays include *Faulkner's Bicycle*, *The Rivers and Ravines* (commissioned and produced by Arena Stage), *Available Light*, and *Rain and Darkness: Hitting for the Cycle*. They have been produced at many theatres including Yale Repertory Theatre, The Actors Theatre of Louisville – Humana Festival of New Plays, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Center Stage, the McCarter Theatre, the La Jolla Playhouse, Arena Stage, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Rivendell Theatre, the Magic Theatre, New Playwrights Theatre and Off Broadway in New York.

Recent and new projects include a commission from Signature Theatre for a new play, tentatively titled *The Suppressed-Desire Ball*, directing Michele Lowe's play *The Smell of the Kill* at Round House Theatre, *The J. M. Barrie Project*, a collaborative piece with the MFA Acting students at Case-Western Reserve University and The Cleveland Playhouse, and a commission to adapt Gerda Lerner's memoir *FIREWEED: A Political Biography* for Madison Repertory Theatre.

She has three times been awarded NEA Playwriting Fellowships and been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. She has been a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and won the First Prize Kesselring Award. She has been the recipient of a TCG Extended Collaboration Grant and a McKnight Fellow, and in 2005 an NEA/TCG Playwriting Residency Award. Her plays are published by the Dramatists Play Service, Samuel French, Inc., American Theatre Magazine, and in several collections.

Ms. McDonald has had a long commitment to teaching and as associate professor and playwright-in-residence at George Mason University's College of Visual and Performing Arts - Institute of the Arts for the past fourteen years. She has taught many other workshops around the country in various graduate playwriting programs and is on the faculty of the Kennedy Center Summer Playwriting Intensive. She received her MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts' Dramatic Writing Program.

Performances

Thursday, March 1, 4 pm (preview) (free admission to UMBC campus community)

Friday, March 2, 8 pm (opening night)

Saturday, March 3, 8 pm (with talkback following performance)

Sunday, March 4, 4 pm

Admission

\$10 general admission; \$5 students and seniors; \$3 for the preview.

The performance on Thursday, March 1st is free for the UMBC campus community.

Tickets are available through MissionTix at www.missiontix.com or by calling MissionTix at 410-752-8950.

Telephone

Public information: (24 hour recorded message): 410-455-ARTS

Tickets: 410-752-8950

Media inquiries only: 410-455-3370

Web

UMBC Arts website: <http://www.umbc.edu/arts>

Tickets: <http://www.missiontix.com/>

IN 10 website: <http://www.umbc.edu/theatre/In10.html>

Online News Releases: <http://www.umbc.edu/news>

Directions

- From Baltimore and points north, proceed south on I-95 to exit 47B. Take Route 166 toward Catonsville and then follow signs to the Theatre.
- From I-695, take Exit 12C (Wilkens Avenue) and continue one-half mile to the entrance of UMBC at the roundabout intersection of Wilkens Avenue and Hilltop Road. Turn left and follow signs to the Theatre.
- From Washington and points south, proceed north on I-95 to Exit 47B. Take Route 166 toward Catonsville and then follow signs to the Theatre.
- Visitor parking is available in the Commons Garage. Visitor parking regulations are enforced on all University calendar days. Hilltop Circle and all campus roadways require a parking permit unless otherwise marked.

Online campus map: <http://www.umbc.edu/aboutumbc/campusmap/>

Images for Media

High resolution images for media are available online:

<http://www.umbc.edu/newsevents/arts/hi-res/>

or by email or postal mail.



###